

# Applied Equine Podiatry

## *An Evolution of Conventional Farriery?*

Until the recent advent of the Holistic health movement, many forms of alternative treatments have been considered frivolous attempts to compensate for the limitations being observed in the contemporary realm of Veterinary medicine and Western medicine as a whole.

Enter Applied Equine Podiatry, now being viewed by many as an alternative to the traditional farrier sciences. Though not fully recognized within the contemporary Veterinary medical realm, the term Equine Podiatry has been used in conjunction with the traditional farrier practice for many years by many different people, most often referring to corrective and therapeutic shoeing.

Webster's definition of Podiatry is the professional study, care, and treatment of the feet, nowhere are shoes mentioned.

What better title for the care and treatment of the horse's feet in a more holistic and natural manner, without the use of the rigid horseshoe, than Applied Equine Podiatry.

Applied Equine Podiatry has in recent years started to come into focus and has begun to define itself as a science and art all to itself and should not be confused with the traditional farrier practice or Equine Podiatry in any way, says Farrier and Applied Equine Podiatrist KC La Pierre, founder of the Institute of Applied Equine Podiatry, Inc. "Applied Equine Podiatry is a viable form of alternative treatment that can and does offer encouraging results", says La Pierre.

For over 12 years La Pierre, a former professional farrier of more than 30 years has been practicing Applied Equine Podiatry and treating horses using alternative methods. The results have been impressive, with a very high success rate in the treatment of the lame horse, according to La Pierre.

Applied Equine Podiatry, as it is taught at the Institute of Applied Equine Podiatry, Inc. encompasses the philosophy that the horse has the innate ability to heal itself; this provided the environment is conducive to healing. Improper hoof conformation and DHS (Deformed Hoof Syndrome) often interfere with this ability.

Applied Equine Podiatry works to achieve and maintain equilibrium of function within the equine foot and achieve dynamic balance in the whole horse. This is achieved by developing proper structure and function in the foot by balancing the hoof capsule to the internal structures of the foot and not the limb. Proper Applied Equine Podiatry technique affectively help the horse to better deal with the shock of impact that may otherwise cause soft tissue damage and lead to muscle imbalance and bone changes, this while better utilizing the energies created throughout the stride. Applied Equine Podiatry further helps the horse regulate its circulatory, nervous and muscular systems and their interdependency on one another. With a strong understanding of how nature intended the foot to work, Applied Equine Podiatry can aid in re-establish equilibrium and return proper biomechanical and neurological function to the distorted or diseased hoof, returning many a lame horse to soundness, both physically and mentally. Not by design, but by nature, the traditional horseshoe may not work to aid in this rehabilitation. It is more often a cause of imbalance and the horseshoe must be removed to correct the altered mechanics of the hoof. Applied Equine Podiatry also offers the horse person a wonderful diagnostic tool. By visually recording hoof structure and mapping any changes that occur, the observer has the ability to pinpoint changes that indicate abnormalities and or problems that may be occurring elsewhere in the horse. When used in conjunction with other complimentary treatments such as Chiropractic, Massage, Acupuncture, Acupressure and Contemporary Veterinary medicine, Applied Equine Podiatry can help to establish a solid foundation that may otherwise be absent. Applied Equine Podiatry as taught by KC La Pierre, RJF, MIAEP is based in part on the Suspension Theory of Hoof Dynamics" that La Pierre introduced in March of 2001.

The Suspension Theory of Hoof Dynamics offers a new perspective on performance by presenting a new definition for performance. **"Performance is achieved when each structure of the foot is capable of sustaining dynamic equilibrium of function for the demands asked of it."**

Applied Equine Podiatry works to distribute the kinetic energies created during impact to effectively maintain or improve structural integrity and promote proper functions, thus achieving peak performance. La Pierre's theories require that a horse's hoof land flat or slightly to its caudal aspect. He feels it is the responsibility of the Applied Equine Podiatrist or Farrier to achieve proper foot fall through the application of a balanced trim. The method of trimming that is used at the Institute and proposed by La Pierre to be used in Applied Equine Podiatry is the HPT Method. (HPT stands for High Performance Trim.)

The proposed trim method results in a detail oriented trim that requires a trained eye capable of seeing the proper structure within an otherwise deformed capsule. One side benefit of the method is the ease in which it can be taught and learned. How to apply the method is easily retained in a short period of time, as a result most farriers can learn how to apply the method in a relatively short time. Even the average horse owner can learn how to maintain their horse's hooves by applying the method. It is important however that the horse owner understand that the lame horse be treated by a Degreed Applied Equine Podiatrist (DAEP) that has completed the appropriate studies, says La Pierre. Strong knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology are needed to utilize Applied Equine Podiatry properly and to full advantage. Some important principles of Applied Equine Podiatry are:

1. Never should living tissue be invaded.
2. Structure + Function = Performance
3. Correct Force is the stimulus for correct growth
4. Do no harm

Always work toward returning proper function to the hoof, but not at the expense of the comfort of the horse. Time is a valuable tool which should be taken full advantage of, inducing trauma to increase circulation should never be entertained. Removal of hoof material should be kept to a minimum and limited to placing the hoof's working systems safely back into equilibrium.

There are absolutes in Applied Equine Podiatry, overall structural integrity is observed and used as a guide in the application of all trims. The method accommodates the many different structures observed in the unlimited number of hoof types encountered. Viewing angles as absolutes for trimming is avoided. One absolute that is used is the live sole plane, a virtual plane which lay perpendicular to the internal structures which offers reference for placing all components into equilibrium with one another, thus supporting theory. The method allows for repeatable results and supports the desired results of other methods that propose balancing to the axis of the foot.

What does all this mean? Does it mean that only the fully trained DAEP can apply a proper trim or use Applied Equine Podiatry to aid the horse? No, it would be ridiculous to think so, says La Pierre. There are many capable farriers and hoof care specialists currently applying a variety of trims to the benefit of the horse. Most do follow, though not proclaimed, the principles and philosophies of Applied Equine Podiatry. Most however base the model for their trim on either the feral horse or on conventional static balance, while Applied Equine Podiatry does not, says La Pierre. The method came about in response to the development of the Suspension Theory of Hoof Dynamics and the desire to correct hoof deformities in the domestic horse. Applied Equine Podiatry is a logical vehicle for a sound trimming method. There are many capable, concerned horse owners out there that can and do practice Applied Equine Podiatry and the HPT Method to the benefit of their horses, says

La Pierre. Additional benefits to the application of Applied Equine Podiatry and the HPT Method are the relief of symptoms associated with DHS (Deformed Hoof Syndrome) and an increase in biomechanical balance and neurological performance. When used in conjunction with other alternative and traditional healing arts, the concept of "Whole Horse Health" grows stronger. Visit [www.EquinePodiatry.com](http://www.EquinePodiatry.com) for more information.